



MARSH MOON

Upon a night so quiet that the breath
Of honeysuckle was a measured thing,
I sat upon a marsh-bank dark as death,
The only stir a heron's whitened wing
Spreading and folding silent as the
night.

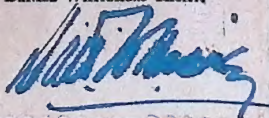
Then suddenly above the grass it came,
A full moon lifting like a bird of light
Rippling the waters with its cold white
flame.

The heron sought the grasses to behold
This strange new bird that drifted down
the air,

Resting upon the waters bright and
bold,

Then with a cry as swift, but lovelier
Than music is, as old as Time is old,
A thousand silver feathers floated there.

DANIEL WHITEHEAD HICKY.



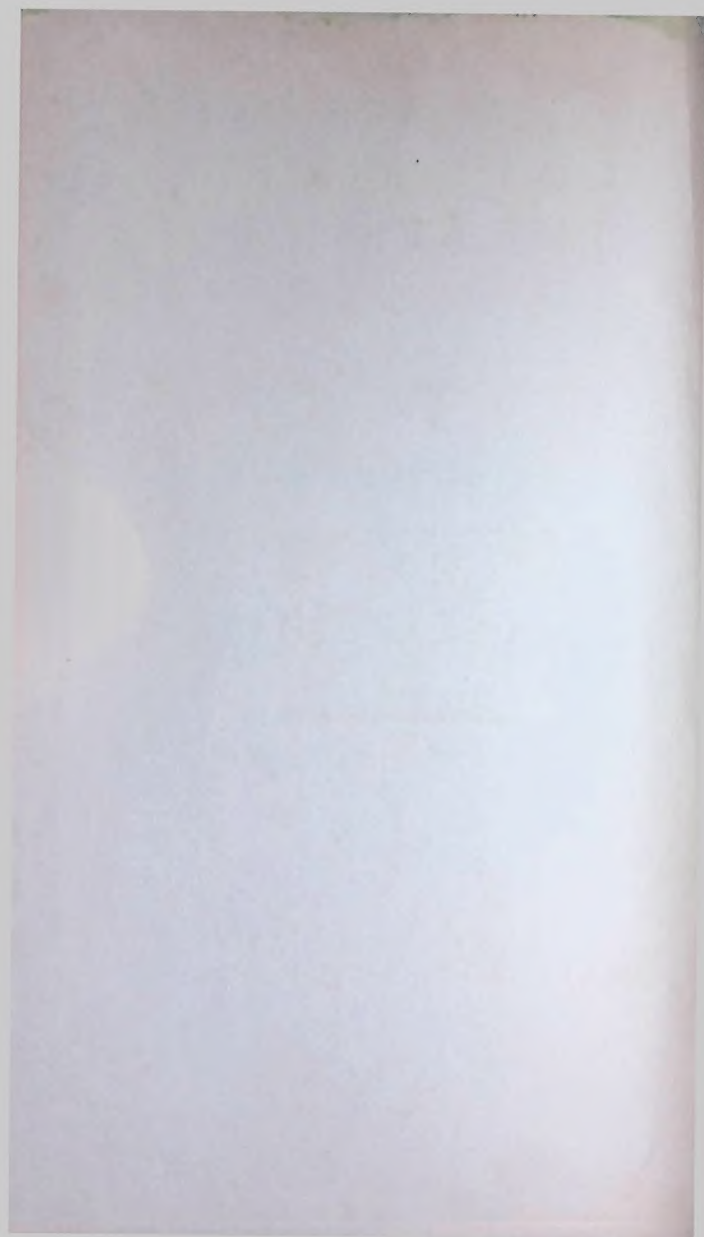
To Millie Andersson
with every good wish

Sincerely

Wm. B. Main

December 10, 1937.

CALL BACK THE SPRING



CALL BACK THE SPRING

BY

DANIEL WHITEHEAD HICKY



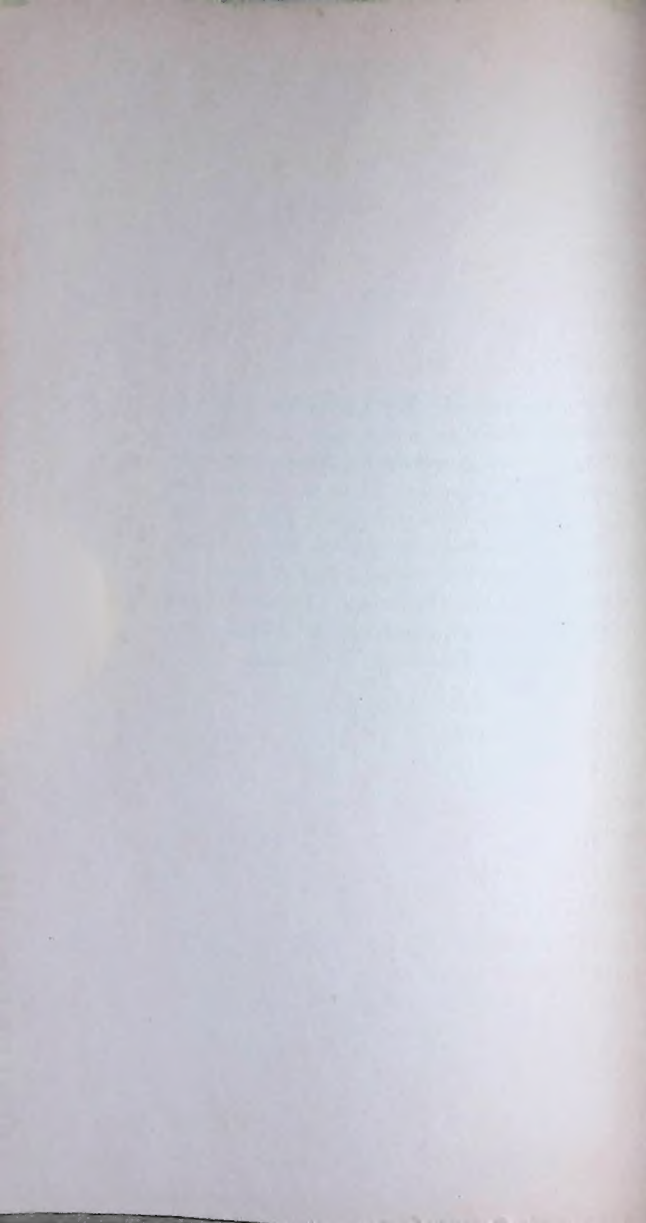
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CALL BACK THE SPRING



AFTER SUNSET: TAORMINA

How silently the shattering almonds' breath
Captures the darkness! Only an hour ago
I watched the hot sun plunge to fiery death,
I heard the cool sea steam, the undertow
Sucking the colors out in rose and gold,
Breaking in silence. Suddenly, like a cry,
Etna against the deepening dark unrolled
Its coral signature across the sky.
You clasped my hand as though you were afraid
Of so much darkness after so much light,
Then softly as a wind you laid your head
Upon my shoulder in the gathering night.
New stars bloomed out, the silence fell unstirred;
I tried to speak, but ah, there was no word.

BLOODROOT

COMING upon you suddenly, unaware,
Finding your star-shaped petals hidden there
Beneath the burnished leaves of autumns lost,
I said: This is a shining star of frost
A leaf has harbored from the early sun,
But going closer, being a curious one,
I stooped and brushed the quiet leaves away,
Watching you tremble in the light of day
Even as I, beholding beauty come
Unheralded. In wild delirium
I thought: Now spring has come again to light
The darkened wood with boughs of white,
To blind the eye, to halt the breath,
To shout aloud the lie of death.

But then I said, lest barren boughs should hear,
Quite to myself: This thing is very clear;
I am a trespasser, have come upon
A secret. Being honest, and alone,
I pushed the copper leaves back into place,
Hiding the bloodroot flower's startled face,
Keeping the spring's white secret in my heart
Safely as under the leaves I tore apart.

CREDO

I AM not one of those who hold
That cunning, panting, tiger, Gold,
Is at the world's throat, sinking there
His furious claws; that grim despair
Will overtake it, draw its breath,
Leaving the world a planet of death
Where all that once was beautiful
Is only food for hawk and gull.

No mortal man who comes my way
May ever tell me this: The day
That dawns tomorrow shall not be
As full of light and alchemy
Of rose and yellow, or the sun
Be lesser glory to look upon;
That noons and afternoons shall fall
In tides across my garden wall
Less beautiful than those that go
This moment like a golden snow
The wind has whipped into a foam;
That any path I chance to roam

In springtime shall be lesser green
With fewer shadows in between
The quivering timid leaves where blue
Of scented heavens shatters through.

Always I know that I shall walk
The lanes of summer where the talk
Of sunlit streams is clear and deep,
Speaking phrases the heart must keep,
And when the fires of autumn burn
I know that I shall not return
To any hill, lest I am blind,
But, suddenly, my eyes will find
The cool blue flame of gentians there,
A flame as blue as is the air,
Or stumble, finding at my feet
A swirl of gold leaves bright and sweet.
Or in the days that winter brings,
Picking white music from the strings
Of sleet and ice, that I shall fail
To hear its crystal festival.

I, being poet, perhaps a fool,
Have learned my lessons in a school
Far different from other men,
And yet, somehow, we are akin:

For, dying in the depths of night,
We do not cry to Gold for light
Nor lean upon its glittering rod,
But in the darkness whisper: God!

LOVERS, WITH SUMMER WANING

LOVERS, with summer waning, now behold
How dust reclaims all things that dust alone
Can lend the barren earth: the sunflower's gold,
The laden bough, the vine across the stone.
Pause for a moment; hear the grieving wind
Bearing the remnants of beauty in a tide,
The guttering lights of leaves, frail blossoms thinned
To a single petal. When you have sighed and sighed,
Turn then unto each other; hand in hand
Walk slowly back the path from whence you came,
Passing the ploughs of Time upon the land
Turning to dust again the summer's flame.
Lovers alone, beneath a gathering sky,
May say in truth: "It is a lie, a lie!"

SOUNDS

THERE is so much of sound escapes the ear!
The fragile yellow sound that crocus make
Lifting in measured rhythms each shining spear;
The small, unwilling sands that tremble and break.
Violets, folded in slumber beneath the snow,
Waking with purple whispers from their bed,
Announcing, clarion-like, the final thaw—
Yet who has heard a word the violets said?
The long, slow golden rain of suns upon
The fields of twilight; songs the pale stars sing
Climbing the slopes of darkness one by one;
The moon's bright call to lovers, taking wing.
O gracious God, giving to mortal ear
Only the sounds the listening heart can bear!

BLUE MORNING

As in a dream I saw them, seven children,
The sun of Sicily in their eyes, their laughter
Ringing like bells of foam the wild sea tosses,
Breaking upon a rock grown numb with music.
I watched the wild flowers at their feet bend downward,
And up again, when suddenly their feet were gone,
Following the hoops they rolled, the ball they threw.
And standing there that blue Sicilian day,
Etna behind me like a shield forever,
Pale almonds over my head in a pink cloud,
I said: O God, that I could mold this moment
Into a stone—a shape and sound and beauty
Imperishable, to press against my heart,
To wear smooth with my fingers when I am old,
For being old is doubting all one saw,
And heard, and knew, upon the shores of youth;
Age only believes the harsh wind at the door,
The dying embers, the rattle in the throat . . .

A GRAVE IN BELLEAU WOOD

Jean Gavreau

1917

ANOTHER spring has broken where you lie
Lost deep in slumber and indifferent
To this, or any spring's green ecstasy.
Slowly, and silently, every leaf is bent
Upward, and shining, toward its ultimate bloom;
A bird sings in a resurrected tree;
Bright-throated, almost drunk with lilacs' perfume,
He sings of spring, of spring eternally.
But what can spring or words of mortals mean
To you who lie one with the springs long lost—
One with the leaves of summer, with the lean
Broken and barren boughs hidden by frost—
To you who gave upon these fields of death
At youth's full tide, your last sweet spark of breath?

Ah, what a little, little cross to hold
Above this dust your sacrifice, to mark
The unspent moons, the loves foresworn, the bold
High-singing heart you tossed into the dark!
Only the wind remembers where you lie,
Only the wind, this cross, and one lone bird
Brushing his wing upon the quiet sky,

Singing of spring as though you waked and heard.
O gallant youth, lost in your loneliness
Save for the wind, this cross—too well, too well,
I see the battles' glamour, the laurel's caress
Upon your silent brow, and like a bell
That will not ring, I hear Fame's trumpets blow!
I leave you to your victory, Jean Gavreau.

I WEEP FOR EARTH

I WEEP for you, O Earth! Your waterfalls
Harnessed for power, their crystal singing done,
Your forests where the frightened bluebird calls
Unanswered, felled to highways one by one.
Your flowers torn by swift, relentless hands,
Your darkness lighted by artificial stars,
Trenches ploughed deep within your quiet lands,
White Aprils crimsoned by a thousand wars.
Your mountains tunneled; breathless, startled deer
Pressed back, at bay, in depths where man shall be
With shout and shell before the turning year;
Your conquered heaven and your conquered sea.
I weep for you, O Earth, as one who lies
With cancer gnawing at his heart, his eyes.

AUTUMN

BELOVÉD, Autumn tells us all we know
And all that we shall ever know. Your hand
In mine, this hillside scarlet with the glow
Of orchards ripening on a ripening land,
No word I speak to measure out my love
Avails me anything, nor, lip to lip,
No kiss, no whisper here, shall ever prove
A thing beyond these tremulous leaves that drip
In golden silence down the listening day.
Once April, like the youth we know this hour,
Lay on these boughs, and blooms in bright array;
Now fruit, unbroken promise of the flower,
Drops and is done where stubbled grasses drowse.
All life, all love, is written in these boughs.

SUNRISE: LOW COUNTRY

As THOUGH they knew the moment, the dark pines listen,
Their needles stirring, restless for the light.
Wind-sharpened edges of the grasses glisten
Where the last star is waning with the night.
Marsh lilies breathe in measured syllables
Beneath the heavy silence of the mist,
And suddenly, far out, a heron calls,
Spreading swift wings of feathered amethyst.
This hesitant moment between the dark and day
Here at the waters' edge, Time, even, might cease,
All scent, all sound, all color drift away,
The mountains of the ocean seek release . . .
But, truer than any promise by mortal given,
The sun swings back, its slow flame lapping heaven.

DEER AT DAWN

I CAME upon them at the edge of night,
Three deer who paused beside a forest pool
Drinking the darkened water sweetened with light,
Making a slow sound, crystal-like and cool.

Rising and falling in a measured grace
I watched their delicate heads, I heard their hooves
Press on the waking earth till, face to face,
I stood before them like a man who moves

In slumber silently lest he wake his dream.
Slowly they looked at me, and unafraid,
Above the tremulous waters of the stream;
Softly I stole away with no word said.

And this I pondered: How could they have run
Hearing my footsteps, with a swift surprise
Leaping into the forest one by one,
Who look on dawn with calm untroubled eyes?

CALL BACK THE SPRING

WHEN you and I who now are worn with loving
Deep in these daisies, lost to Time and man,—
You who were so afraid of love, of roving
Too far from where your father's acres ran,
I, fired with youth, who carry on my tongue
The words of lovers, and speak them over again,—
When we are weary and no longer young,
Are half a world away from where we have lain
This sun-drenched afternoon—shall we not yearn
Dark in the night, and with a sudden cry,
Remember daisies by a hill's sharp turn,
The lass you were, the lad that once was I—
And, sated with slumber, murmur a half-heard thing,
Beseeching all the gods: Call back the spring?

LOW TIDE: TAHITI

ONE of those fools am I who like to lie
 Upon a beach the length of a summer day
Hearing the breakers sighing with a sigh
 So deep it almost bears my heart away!
And lying there, with only gulls for friends,
 And every heart-beat throbbing like a rhyme
Beneath this stretch of blue that never ends,
 I tell myself: "I am outside of Time."

One of those fools am I, and I confess
 More noble things to do than watch the sun
Flounder beyond the last waves' loneliness,
 Sucked in the sea like some doomed galleon.
And when the last spark like a new star goes
 Into the waiting darkness, flares, and dies,
Somehow, I clutch my throat; no mortal knows
 After the nightfall that the sun will rise.

One of those fools am I, and God forgive
 Me lying upon this beach the summer through,
Writing my name in sands, a name to live
 A fleeting moment, with nobler tasks to do;

Forgive me, God, this idling under the sky
With seagulls drifting as slowly as the day,
Hearing the breakers sighing with a sigh
So deep it almost bears my heart away!

THE WRESTLERS

SHOULDER to shoulder, thigh to sweating thigh,
Arm locked in sinewy arm, in agony
Their muscles surge, recede, their swift limbs fly
Into the air. Now, prancing, knee to knee,
They circle back and forth, they lift, they plunge
Like thunder out of silence. Again they start,
Tossing with bulging eyes, and rising, lunge
Like jungle beasts with arrows in their heart.
Thus might the darkness pin the daylight down,
Autumn grapple with winter, age attack
The young, the beautiful, grief fell the clown,
Time pin the struggling centuries on their back.
But slower, more contemplate, with measured breath,
Fiercer, and surer, the wrestlers, Life and Death.

GEORGIA NIGHT

THE sun's red wick is blown out like a lamp.
About my cabin door the darkness falls.
The wind comes over the canebrake, indolent, damp,
A wind too tired to fly. A sparrow calls.
Deeper and deeper I see the darkness go
In black swift tides across my cotton patch
And settle, like a spell, upon each row.
I light my pipe, and leaning back, I watch
The fireflies' yellow journey through the dark;
They flare and fade and flare and fade again,
Uncertain, mortal-like. Each ripening spark
Burns on and on, and farther still. I strain
My nostrils toward the swamp. They do not fail:
Wild lilies opening by the clock, almost.
Their breath drifts toward me slowly; paler than pale
It drifts, like measured breathing of a ghost.
The moon comes up; its silver bends apart
The grasses, and a lone bird wakes the hour;
Now all is still again, peace on my heart
And slumber, like the nightfall on a flower.

LINES FOR A SUMMER DAY

THE world is yours today, my lad. Your feet
Possess each mile of daisy field they cover,
And where they pause beside the cool retreat
Of shady brooks and hillsides red with clover,
They, too, are yours, and all the butterflies
You chase like shining arrows down the wind;
The robins in the willows and the skies
Bluer than seas of larkspur. You will find
The wild flowers ring their bells for you; the grass
Grows sweet beneath your shadow as you run,
And all the furry fellows as you pass
Will pause to greet you in the summer sun.
Remember, as the twilight takes the lane,
The world is yours today, but never again.

NOT THE GREAT SHIP

Not the great ship that pulled its anchor up,
Making a sound that all the harbor heard,
Then drifted away, and slowly out of sight,
As might earth's shadow slipping from the sun;
Not the great ship I shall remember but
The gulls that circled above it, and their crying,
Plunging against the furnace of the sun,
Dipping their wings into its reddening fires,
The scent of burning feathers in my nostrils.

MUSIC

You are the unfolding of all white flowers
When the night is dark and passionate with April;
You are the voice of purple shadows speaking
Frail words that only God and poets hear.

You are the delicate silver wheel that swings
The moon's bright pendulum from dusk to dawn,
The hunger of the sea that leaps and cries
Its loneliness to cold, unlistening rocks.

You are the fire that burns in leaves when Autumn
Is fast upon the barren hills; the spirit
Rising, shining and victorious, when death
Has stilled the blood's last battle in the heart.

AN OLD MAN IN AUTUMN

I saw him gathering bright leaves as they fell
Swirling in tides about him. None could tell
Why he should venture out into the cold
Grey wind of Autumn gathering leaves. Being old
And stooped a little, making a funny sound
Catching the red leaves drifting to the ground,
Putting them in his pockets one by one,
The neighbors nodded, saying: "His mind is done."

Children frolicked about him, laughed to see
Yellow and scarlet falling from a tree,
Piled them into a pyramid and made
A fire that rippled like music softly played,
And joining hands, they sang a song together,
Mimicked the old man braving knife-edged weather.
He did not answer them, but stood, in turn,
Hearing the bright leaves crackle, watching them burn. . . .

BEAUTY AND BEAUTY ALONE

WHEN the wild tumult of the heart is done
And all our trivial words are less than dust,
Each shining victory that our swords have won,
Forgotten, and the last sword turned to rust;
When all the passion that was ours to spend,
All the bright laughter of our lips defying
Time and his regiments, come to their end,
And, lost beneath the ivy, our bones are lying;
Then, only, shall we know no conqueror
Shall capture beauty. Past our little day
A thousand thousand years her hands shall be
Carving the sea's swift patterns, kindling a star,
Shaping a rose to bleed its petals away.
Beauty and beauty alone knows victory.

I HAVE A NEED OF YOU

I HAVE a need of you such as the night
For silence and the fiery Pleiades,
Such as my room has need of candlelight
And hearthlogs when the dark wind bows the trees.
You are a part of me, as much a part
As petals are a part of any flower;
You are the heartbeats ringing in my heart,
The minutes chiming away each shining hour.
No stars drift outward on the tides of dawn,
No suns like burning ships go down the west,
But your dark hair across my pillow is thrown
Softer than sunlight, and my lips are pressed
Upon your lips. Ah love, with every breath
I have a need of you, past even Death.

SUMMER'S END

THERE is a sombre sadness in the going
Of summer's blossoms down the amber wind,
In music of the maples' first leaves blowing
In ranks of scarlet all too suddenly thinned.
It is a time to pause, considering
How lightly, all too lightly, beauty lies
Upon the scales of mortal measuring;
How swiftly beauty comes, how swiftly dies.
Now all that summer leaves is but a stream
Whose mirror bears the memory of her,
A late rose lonely in its languid dream
Beside a lane where only grasses stir,
And lingering at the edges of the day,
A sunflower's dial that ticked the summer away.

AD INTERIM

PIERCING the dark clouds always this bright clearing
Hovers above the meadows of my mind:
With each recurring daybreak I am hearing
No dearth of lark-song arrowing the wind.
There is no lack of wild flowers on the hills,
No brook grown fainter with its crystal notes,
And, breathing deep of twilight, my heart fills
Still with the fragrance of the lilies' throats.
Young lovers, arm in arm, and eyes alight,
Seek out their shadowy lanes beneath the shower
Of stars unfolding like a dream begun;
The sun climbs up the east its appointed hour.
Nothing has changed but gold. What is gold to one
Who holds his world against his heart tonight?

O SHINING TARPON

O SHINING tarpon, lifting your silver length
Out of these waters fired with set of sun,
Fighting with all your passion and lyric strength
Tugging against my line till fighting is done,
I hoist your quivering spangles in the air,
Bewildered at every jewel the sun has made:
Your topaz eyes, your amethyst scales; I stare
Along your opaled throat, your fins of jade.
This is the price you pay for beauty! This,
The toll of battle and the reckoning;
Now must you know all splendor, all ecstasies,
A sudden burning and a dying thing.
O shining tarpon, behold with blinding eyes
This swiftly waning sun, these darkening skies!

FIRST LOVE

ON SUCH a night as this, beloved one,
When darkness blows slow stars across the sky
And flowers quiver with their folding done
And leaves of maples turn their linings and sigh
As two young lovers sighed and sighed again
On a dark hilltop lost across the years—
Remember moonlight falling like slow rain
Upon our trysting, and the sudden tears
At parting, you going up, I down the path,
Each looking back till losing out of sight
The kiss we threw, the voice lost in the breath
Of jasmine heavy on the summer night.
Upon a night like this when, ember on ember,
The slow stars fire the dark, beloved, remember.

FIREFLIES

THE day has crept into the patch of pines
Beyond the honeysuckle, and the rows
Of cotton, ripening. The last red lines
Of sunset flare and die. The darkness grows.
Who are these ghostly travelers who come
Up from the roadways searching through the dark,
Prying into the thickets of wild plum,
Swinging their lanterns spark on golden spark?
I call to them; I cannot turn them back;
I shout to them again, with no reply;
Still, still, I see their lanterns in the black
Wide darkness burning, eye on eerie eye.
They face me suddenly and, as suddenly, say:
"We search for daylight. Has it passed this way?"

WILD FLOWERS

I HAVE known wild flowers in the fields of Spain
Slumberous, hot with sunlight, scarlet as fire,
And, walking past them, I have hushed my voice
Lest it should wake them from their languid hour.
Yellow they were, and blue as were those skies
Where no cloud foamed across their breathless space,
But none among them slumbering in the sun
Held half the brightness, the color of your eyes.

And on a cliff that looked upon the sea,
A tall Sicilian cliff that knew no pattern,
I came upon a fragrance unaware—
Flowers that seemed to plunge into the waters
Drunk with a beauty that was theirs alone;
But no, not there, not even there, nor since,
Has bloomed a wild flower sweeter than your lips.

MOONRISE

THIS is the hour when every man must learn
That he is less than any listening grass
Bending before the shadows as they pass;
Less than the yellow, singing sparks that burn
In any firefly's lamp. Now must he know
The emptiness of words, with silence so deep
He hears white lilacs stirring in their sleep
Like lovers half awake and whispering low.
Watching the slow moon rise, its cold fire press
Upon the dark earth covering it like a frost,
How trivial now the pulsing in his veins,
The meager victories the flesh attains!
This is the hour when every man is lost,
Lost utterly in his own littleness.

CONFESSION

MY HEART will never, never, be yours alone.
Too many things I love to speak the lie:
Red tides of sunset breaking on the sky,
Slow twilights, and the first rose suddenly blown
To fiery splendor on a day in spring;
Cold mountain water passionate and strong
And wild with music, and the first sharp song
Of birds when day has folded like a wing.
My head will lie upon your shoulder deep
Into the night, and I will find you fair,
And swing the gates to heaven in my sleep
Beside you, breathing the fragrance of your hair,
And though my lips shall always claim your own,
My heart will never, never, be yours alone.

FLANDERS

“THE spring has broken on these fields again!
Ah, what a wealth, a riot of beauty!” you said
That morning as we crossed the Flanders plain,
Looking to right nor left the while we sped
Along the roads. You pointed out to me
This battlefield, this dugout, and this trench.
I strained my eyes as far as I could see:
There stood the crosses, as a sea, immense
With whiteness that was foam the crosses made
Beneath the sunlight, stretching on and on.
“And here it was, beneath this lime tree’s shade
The first shell fell upon these fields at dawn.
See how the limbs grew out again, see how
The cool leaves ring like bells beneath the sun!
Just past this bridge we’ll pause. I’ll show you now
The place two thousand fell. Wheels of a gun
Still mark the soil beneath this shining grass.
Ah, just to breathe the air, to let your eyes
Travel along these fields, to let them pass
Across the tides of Spring beneath these skies!

How beautiful the day is! Look! A flame
Of crocus sets the wind afire! I think
We'd best stop at that village . . . What's its name?
We'll rest down there, with sparkling sherry to drink!"

The years shall keep our friendship inviolate;
Time has a way of doing that, somehow;
But as I stood beside the old inn gate
I wanted to ask you this with a furrowed brow:
*Were there really leaves upon those straggling trees,
And, truly, did you hear a white-throat sing?
Were there flowers among those crosses, and bees
Sucking the honey from the heart of Spring?*

HUNGER

SHOULDER to shoulder with granite and steel,
Herded like sheep beaten over a plain,
Forging ahead with the cart and the wheel,
I forfeit my life like slow-grinding grain.
Time is too precious to pause in my track
To dream of a world that lies past the mill;
On I must go, I can never turn back
To see if new Aprils conquer a hill.
Broken and bleeding, the day that I fall
Swift as a leaf in the rushing of feet,
Bring me no water nor food—let them all,
Herded and breathless, stand there in the street
Gaping, nor knowing, as they press close,
I thirst for a sunset, starve for a rose.

DAISIES

THE day was white with daisies. Like a cloud
They drifted on the meadows where we stood.
Even the robins were jealous; sharp and loud
They called from leafy heavens of the wood.
The east was blue before us, and the west,
A deeper blue stretched to the north and south,
And I remember the frail tides of your breast,
Half-frightened; the wild sweet berry of your mouth.
How many springs have waned to summer's dust,
How many autumns lain upon a bier
I cannot say, nor count them, if I must,
But I remember, as yesterday, and as clear,
Two lovers lost in daisies and happy so—
And that was long and long and long ago.

LOVES

WHEN all my yesterdays are counted over
Like beads upon the rosary of Time,
And I recall each rôle I played as lover,
Remembering many a girl in many a clime,
I shall remember Irish girls whose eyes
Are blue as heather blowing in the sun,
And dark-eyed girls beneath Italian skies
Whose lips are scarlet dreams but half-begun.
And when I count them over, as lovers do,—
The loves of half an afternoon's brief space,
The loves I left at daybreak, cold and dim—
Far more than all I know I'll hold most true
The one who flung my faults into my face
And loved me still for all and all of them.

PASTORAL

GOLDEN with sunset the quiet sheep go
Soft as a shadow across the dark grass;
Driven by twilight they herd, row on row,
Cropping the daisies as slowly they pass.
Many a sundown I pause at my door
Hearing the silence that falls like a spell,
And see the slow sheep come over the moor
Making no sound but the drift of a bell.
Morning is nice with a lantern in hand
Going to town ere the countryside's up,
And noon with its languid dream on the land,
But sunset is best with dew in the cup
Of flowers that thirst, and sheep that go by
Cool as spring water across a hot eye.

THE SEA CAPTAIN

You say that he is dead, and gulls still shaking
The silence of this harbor with their cry—
Waves reined with yellow sunlight, rising, breaking
In emerald thunder?—Do sea captains die?
You say you lowered him into his grave
Just yesterday, and heard the sand close over?
Don't chide a sailor, lad! Your lips must save
Their jesting for a fool. No South sea lover
Can ever quit a ship. So long as stars
Burn like gold fireflies in the tropic night,
So long as tides lap on old harbor bars,
There is no rest for him. Your words fall light
Upon my ears as mist upon the sea;
Tomorrow the old captain sails with me!

SPRING AND I

SPRING and I beside blue waters loitered,
Drinking the sun, the Mediterranean sky,
Climbing the hills, following the twisted olives
Making a grey sound when the wind went by.

We scaled the almonds, shattering their bloom
As though the light of dawn were blown to earth,
And on a craggy hillside found a bird
Who stilled our hearts a moment with his mirth.

We trampled fields of wild flowers, heard their bells
Like yellow cymbals ringing in our wake,
Brought to our room, with darkness, all the stars
The miserly eye of night would let us take.

Happy those days of blue, long nights of silver,
Time drifting slowly as a petal's fall;
How sweet the lips of spring, her white young body
Beside me there, and yielding to my call!

Where are those hilltops now? The shattering almonds?
Where is the bird flown? Where, the wild flowers' bell?
How shall I find them ever and ever again—
For spring is gone, and only spring can tell.

OFF THE GREEK COAST

LIKE quiet words upon a quieter mind
The fishing trawlers drift against the sun,
Their smoldering sails unrippled by the wind,
Their bright nets glittering till the tides are done.
Asleep, or nearly so, the fishermen drowse
Unmindful of the amethyst and gold
The sun has wrapped, like laurels, about their brows,
Of all the burning jewels their hands can hold.
The great bronze shoulder and the hairy chest,
The naked thigh, save for a tunic there,
Turn golden with the sunset as the west
Simmers to ashes in the darkening air.
They sleep, nor know beneath this rain of fire
They are the gods come back, of Troy and Tyre.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG NUN

HER face is pressed upon the pane. She sees
Across the walls another April stir
In waking buds of red and lavender
And sudden emerald capturing the trees.
She hears a robin break its heart upon
A black bough white with newly-petaled snow,
And down a lane, a young lad, whistling, go
Beneath the apple branches pale as dawn.
She clasps her rosary with a tightened hand
As softly, through the corridors, she hears
Slow music gathered from the holy land
Drift, as the hours will drift through all her years.
She gave her soul to God. Again, again
She asks forgiveness, pressing at the pane.

O PITY NOT THE DEAD

O PITY not the dead, the lovers lying
Beneath the measured rain of autumn leaves
Swirling in yellow music, drifting and sighing;
Only the beating heart it is that grieves.
O pity not the old, reclaimed by earth,
Lost deep in silence of the dust that stirs
Quietly, giving cool green Aprils birth,
Slow Summers, and the Autumn's smoldering fires.
Pity, O rather pity the young who go
Against the sharp swift blade of love unknowing,
The poet clinging to a sunset's glow,
The dreamer starving for his dream. Be throwing
Pity on those who, asking bread, taste stone;
It is their hearts that grieve, and theirs alone.

DARK JUSTICE

EARLY they gathered for justice,
Eager, the countryside's men,
Running him down; and they scented
His path, but lost it again.
The hounds bayed low in the darkness,
Like fireflies were their eyes
As they sniffed at the honeysuckle,
Spurred by the posse's cries.
Down they went through the gulleys,
Over a brook they leapt,
No sound but the silence listening
To rhythms the water wept.
Two hundred strong they followed,
Their lanterns bright in the dark
As they forged ahead and stumbled,
Led by the bloodhounds' bark.
They ran him down and caught him,
A cringing thing, wild-eyed;
Terror was on his pleading lips;
Begging for mercy he cried
Again and again, but they followed,
Two hundred men, and strong,
Mowing him down with their rifles.
Bleeding, they dragged him along

By the light of their ghostly lanterns
Over the briar and thorn,
Swinging him up by a hemp rope,
Moaning and riddled and torn,
Pointing their rifles upon him
Again and again, to make sure,
And left him there in the darkness,
Swinging, alone, with no stir
In the awful silence that gathered
But the drip, drip, drip on the ground
Of life ebbing fast in the moonlight;
Slowly they went, with no sound
But the sudden whirring of motors,
Their headlights' yellow flare
Rounding the darkened roadways,
Dusting the country air.
Lonely he swung in the silence,
Riddled; but plainer than death,
The vigil of Venus above him,
The honeysuckle's breath.

FOR JOHN GALSWORTHY

BEYOND the blue, bright boundary of our day,
In that far land that knows your footsteps now,
May English daisies star your fields alway
And laurels of English violets wreath your brow.
May broad lakes holding heaven upside down—
Broad lakes that Wordsworth knew, and Shakespeare's
 lanes

Stretch to the north and south, and lilacs be blown
In riots of lavender beneath white rains.
May Surrey's countryside lie at your door,
Fast at your door in that far land of peace,
Your happy wild flowers dance forevermore
In tides of color through bright eternities.
On those far shores where slow clouds surge and foam
In silent breakers, may you whisper: "Home!"

WISDOM

WHEN I was young—and very young—

Say seventeen or so,

I said: "I'll sail the seven seas,

And every port I'll know;

I'll seek for fame, I'll seek for gold,

And hoard and pile it high—"

When I was young—and very young—

At seventeen, said I.

Now I am old—and very old—

And this is what I say:

"Fame will dim, and gold will fade,

And glory pass away;

And love alone, of all I sought,

A hearth fire leaping bright,

A roof that holds a robin's song

Comfort me tonight."

So all ye lads who sail the seas

Put into port today,

And hear the words that wisdom speaks—

These are the words I say:

"Build ye a roof beneath the trees,

A new moon swinging high,

And kiss your love and latch the door

And let the world go by!"

IN APRIL

O THAT a mortal tongue should speak of death
Hearing the bluebirds calling out his name,
Seeing the black boughs light with sudden flame,
The pale wind tremulous with the jonquils' breath.
All is brought back that once was swept away:
Last summer's rose, the autumn's scarlet leaf;
Earth throbs with laughter, trampling down its grief;
All that was lost is resurrected today.
The hours like a carillon of bells
Strike in the heart's high temples, quicken the blood;
The frailest bloom unfolding eagerly tells
In syllables of color through the wood
How man's a fool in April to sigh and sigh
When every quivering sand hurls death the lie!

SONG OUT OF ERIN

Nothing at all can happen to me,
Nothing now;
My life is plain within my palm
As autumn on the bough.

I won my love, and ah, 'twas sweet
Courting in the spring
With daisy fields to wander in,
Orchards blossoming,

And ah, her kiss was sweet upon
My lips as berries are,
And never once could I forget
Eyes like any star.

Days were sweet before the hearth,
Silence at the gate,
Aprils coming earlier,
Summers lingering late.

But ah, my love is lost to me,
Gone and gone away,
And though I follow, sunset-time,
The road she took one day

Never do I see her face,
Never, never, hear
Her voice like music ringing
Bell-like and clear.

Nothing at all can happen to me,
Nothing now;
My life is plain within my palm
As autumn on the bough.

IF I WERE YOUNG AGAIN

IF I were young again and full of mirth
There is no road that would not know my feet:
Jade depths of jungle, dark and blossom-sweet,
And perilous mountains at the rim of earth.
I would know ways of bird and wind and flower,
Sunrise and nightfall and the passionate sea;
Above my head no roof would ever be
Save the far heavens in their star-swept hour.
I would behold each slowly breaking dawn
As though it were the last my eyes could know,
Drink deep of water plunging on a stone
Like music out of silence. I would go
Clinging to every hour lest it should wane,
If I were full of mirth and young again.

SNOWFALL AT DUSK

I FOUND your footsteps in the drifting snow,
And swift as any hare beneath the breaking
Of cedar boughs that dangled white and low,
I sought you and I found you and by taking
Your basket on my arm, your lips awoke
To words they would not speak before. With laughter,
And hearts forgetting snowflakes on our cloak
We sought your door. Now in the dusk, years after,
We sit and watch the flames toss yellow embers
Upon the hearth that we have known for long;
They leap and die as swiftly as all Decembers
Since first we met. If I had trudged the wrong
Path through the whitening woods in the half-light,
Would snow be more than snow, these flames as bright?

BEAUTY

ONCE only shall you meet her face to face
And touch her lips and speak her sacred name;
Beauty is ever elusive, and no trace
Is left of her, like shadow after flame.
Blessed are the mortals unto whom is given
The sight of her, the hearing of her breath:
Mothers who tread the tides that turn toward heaven,
And old, old men who close their eyes in death.
Young lovers lost in moonlight see her once,
And poets bending above a shining phrase,
Children wide-eyed with wonder, finding immense
The dandelions that star their emerald days.
Though you should search the earth's circumference
Once only shall you meet her face to face.

AFTER THE LAST SWEET NOTE

AFTER the last sweet note of life has died
And, suddenly, there fall upon my ear
Only the waves of silence breaking clear
As shining crystal of a moonlit tide,
I shall remember in my quiet sleep
That has no waking on these shores again,
Hours fired with passion and with exquisite pain,
Slow dawns that crept like music, dark hours deep
With sorrow like a knife turned in the breast,
And of them all I could not single one
I would not lift unto my lips and taste
Again, but find it good. Upon my stone
Say only this: No lover this side of death
Held happier lease upon a space of breath.









